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A Self-Determination Theory Approach to Understanding the Motivational Dynamics of Team-Based Learning

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The present study investigates the effect of Team-Based Learning (TBL) on students' engagement and learning. The study employs a Self-Determination Theory (SDT) approach to investigate the underlying motivational effects of implementing TBL among a higher education sample. Sixty-four students participated in a quasi-experimental study with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The results show that the students increased significantly from pretest to posttest on intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, external regulation, perceived competence, and perceived autonomy support, as a function of TBL. The students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness increased from pretest to posttest. Further, the results show that the students decreased in amotivation from pretest to posttest. Lastly, the students' engagement and perceived learning increased. A path-analytical model shows that increases in intrinsic motivation, perceived competence and external regulation predicts increases in engagement, which in turn predicts increases in perceived learning. The results are in line with SDT. A teaching method that encourages active learning, as opposed to passive learning, facilitates autonomous motivation (i.e., intrinsic motivation and identified regulation) and decreases unintentionality (i.e., amotivation). In TBL, the teacher is a facilitator of learning, as opposed to a transmitter of information, which might account for the increases in autonomy support. Moreover, functions within TBL might enhance student engagement and perceived learning. However, TBL has several requirements that might be perceived as controlling, which might explain the increase in external regulation. Based on the results, we encourage teachers to consider the motivational pulls within TBL when implementing in courses.